

**MINUTES
DEPARTMENTAL BUDGET HEARINGS
LANCASTER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
COUNTY-CITY BUILDING
ROOM 113
THURSDAY, MAY 23, 2002
12:30 P.M.**

Commissioners Present: Bob Workman, Chair
Bernie Heier, Vice Chair
Kathy Campbell
Larry Hudkins
Ray Stevens

Others Present: Kerry Eagan, Chief Administrative Officer
Gwen Thorpe, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Dave Kroeker, Budget and Fiscal Officer
Amy Prenda, Director of Legal Research and Analysis for
Kissel/E&S Associates
Melissa Koci, County Clerk's Office

The Chair opened the meeting at 12:57 p.m.

HUMAN SERVICES (837)

Kit Boesch, Human Services Director, appeared and distributed documentation regarding her proposed budget and her reduction plan (Exhibits A & B).

Boesch indicated she has three staff in her office and 6 percent of the increase is for salary because there is now a Grant Administrator and a new secretary that will be coming off of her 6-month probation. Boesch said the photocopying expenses are a result of making photocopies of the grants, which sometime consist of making 10 or 15 copies of each document. She said the rent and equipment expense is due to the move to the old Election Commissioner's building.

Boesch said she put the Special Projects in her budget because she might lose them, but would be willing to take them out of her budget until the time comes for that particular project.

Boesch said in her reduction proposal she considered using surplus furniture instead of purchasing new furniture when they move into the new building. She said a conference can be taken out of her budget now and put back in later if the grant is desired and the way the federal government is going right now, there will be at least one conference she will be required to go to.

Boesch also suggested when she does grants on behalf of other agencies she could ask them to make the copies, but the problem with that is if there is a mistake on the document, it would have to be fixed on all copies. She doesn't believe it would save much time if it was done that way.

Dave Kroeker, Budget & Fiscal Officer, asked Boesch if she has talked to Purchasing about a copier because the cost would be what they are now.

Boesch said she has not and also indicated they are scheduled to move into the new building by June 1st, she believes by June 15th they will be moved in.

Kroeker suggested taking the \$6,500 equipment expense out of the Human Services budget and if used furniture is not found, they can take it out of the Building Fund, which would also take the City out of the picture.

Campbell asked what the allowable percentage of increase each agency can have.

Kroeker said it was for the Board to decide, but he believed they came up with 3.5%.

Campbell said she is asking because she needs to be prepared for the Joint Budget and she believes that an increase will need to be budgeted.

INDIGENT SCREENER (626)

Peggy Gentles, County Court Judicial Administrator, appeared and introduced County Court Judge Jean Lovell.

Gentles said her budget has increased largely because the budget last year was based on the part-time person being classified lower than what Personnel ended up classifying them. She said the part-time person will be leaving and going back to Law School so there will be a vacancy, which will decrease the screening services.

Kroeker asked where the money for the NU Policy Center evaluation will come from, and wondered if it should come from the Keno Fund or the 622 budget.

Campbell said it is a one-time expense and should probably go in the Keno budget.

COUNTY COURT (622)

Gentles distributed documentation regarding the proposed budget for County Court (Exhibit C) and said most of the increases are due to circumstances she can't control. She indicated Witness Fees and Guardians at Litem have gone up and the reason Data Processing has gone up is because of the changeover to the Lexis contract.

Gentles said she tried to come up with a 3.5% reduction and can't do it with her budget. She said she could hold off asking for the change in the counter area and is also hoping to absorb the 10% postage increase. She also said there is not as much money being spent on Legal Services this year and she can't explain why.

Hudkins asked if the Witness Fees are up because of the length of trials.

Judge Lovell appeared and said it would be unusual for a witness to come for more than one day to a trial, but they get the same fee whether they are there 10 minutes or all day. She said if there is a continuance at the request of a defendant they have subpoenaed witnesses present in court.

Campbell asked Judge Lovell if there are a number of people that are sitting out fines.

Lovell said there are a few people that sit out fines and at one time several years ago there were people who requested permission to sit out fines who had money in their accounts, but that doesn't happen any longer. She said the Judges don't automatically give people permission to sit out fines and will offer an alternative to it.

Campbell said one of the problems the County is facing is overcrowded conditions in the jail and the Board is going to try to work on some community programs to lower it, but one of the things Mike Thurber, Corrections Director, talked to her about was sitting out fines. She wondered if there would be a program the County Judges would like to see in place in lieu of sitting out fines. She said the biggest expense is the person sitting in jail and there is no way that the fines equate to what it is costing the taxpayer. Campbell said the Board is committed to trying to get those people out of the most expensive resource the County owns, which is the jail.

Lovell said the Judges are well aware of the problem and last year a couple of the Judges visited a couple of other sites in other states to see how their courts are operating. She said all of the Judges have discussed community service instead of fines and also getting someone to coordinate the program so the right people are sent to the right places.

Campbell said the Board is trying right now to find someone in the Adult area who can do for the adults what was done for the Juveniles. Campbell said they created a whole continuum of programs for the youth and it is saving a lot of money for the County.

Lovell said the Judges do recognize the fact that each person gets \$60 a day credit for every day they spend in jail.

Campbell asked Judge Lovell if she could get back to the Board within the next 4 to 6 weeks with program ideas so that it can be budgeted for.

GENERAL FUND MISCELLANEOUS

GENERAL GOVERNMENT (612)

Kroeker indicated there is \$500,000 budgeted for Board of Equalization this year, the contingency fund is at \$1.5 million, Group Insurance Premium is \$550,00 and he budgeted a 6% increase for the County Engineer.

Stevens asked Kroeker how he planned to reduce this budget by 3.5%.

Kroeker said he plans on asking the County Assessor about their requests for three cars.

Campbell asked when the last time was the County spent over \$500,000 for Board of Equalization and if 2003 BOE doesn't have to be paid until the 2004 budget, how much would have to be paid now.

Kroeker said in 1994 the County spent \$459,000 on Board of Equalization and the values had gone up 28% in 1994-1995. He said the BOE expense could be lowered if needed.

JUSTICE SYSTEM (628)

Kroeker said the Legal Services contracts are included in this budget along with Pre-trial Diversion, which will be heard next week. He said the County collects half of the \$76,000 cost from the City which gets paid to Pre-Trial Diversion Services. Pre-trial Diversion Services also runs the Insufficient Funds Check Program for the County Attorney and generate fees from that.

Kroeker noted in the Contingency for Adult Alternatives, Boesch suggested putting \$250,000 in that item because a contract person is needed.

Campbell said it was promised to Mike Thurber that the Board would get the Judges to come up with some types of programs.

Kroeker said Dennis Keefe, Public Defender, is requesting a contract for assigned counsel and administration in the amount of \$92,000 which includes benefits.

Campbell said they could say they are willing to add the assigned counsel, however, should there be additional cuts in either Special Sessions of the Legislature or in Regular Sessions, that job would have to be eliminated. Campbell suggested putting it on the Keno list.

The Board agreed to talk to Keefe and find out if they need to get the Judges sign off to say the Judges would participate in the program.

Kroeker noted under the Adult Alternatives contract he put in \$35,000, but if the Board believes the \$250,000 under the contract for Adult Alternatives will cover it, he will reduce it. The Board agreed it should be reduced.

Kroeker also said Ann Hobbs (3076) started after the budget was adopted and is being paid out of the Human Service's budget. He said this item was moved to the Justice System budget. Kroeker also noted he needs to talk with Sheryl Schrepf regarding the \$45,000 that is under the Expediter category.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES (805)

Kroeker said the County portion of Health & Human Services shows an increase of 4% without budgets from Aging, Status of Women and HandiVan.

Campbell said Health & Human Services is having their budget meeting on June 7th and she would like to come back to the Board after that because of a possible need for additional dollars.

Kroeker said the Court Competency Evaluations could be low with only \$15,000 budgeted under that item.

Kroeker said the Board asked for a list of what was spent on Microcomputers last year and said Doug Thomas, Information Services, will be in to talk to the Board on June 6th.

PUBLIC DEFENDER (625)

Dennis Keefe, Public Defender, appeared and distributed documentation regarding his budget reduction plan (Exhibit D).

Kroeker asked Keefe about the \$92,000 addition and asked if he has talked to the Judges.

Keefe said the Judges haven't decided on the Indigent Defense Standards, which need to be followed in order to receive reimbursement, and he doesn't know if they will even meet them. He said the Indigent Defense Advisory Committee has sent the Judges a memo recommending they meet the Standards and come up with a comprehensive system for everyone.

Keefe reported on the law violation appointments and contract costs as of today, excluding Nebraska Legal Services. His recommendation is the new contract needs to be started as soon as possible because the Courts will start appointing private lawyers, paying them on a case by case basis, which is a lot of money.

Keefe noted he has no control over the workload in his office, they are case driven and when there are more arrests and cases filed, there are more cases in his office to do.

Keefe said if the State's money remains intact, he should be receiving about \$250,000. Keefe said it is money that he has never received before therefore he did not include it in his budget.

Keefe noted he may be able to eliminate the remodeling costs when they move into the old Personnel office. He said there could be a \$2,000 reduction in supplies, \$3,000 reduction for expert witnesses and \$3,500 for Psychiatrists.

Keefe also said he is in need of another Para-legal to work with the Mental Health cases, which includes the 238 pending cases. He said this person is responsible for doing home visits, team meetings and preparing reports for the Attorney's and right now the person handling them has had to prioritize cases, which puts the burden back on the lawyers to do the work themselves or the work doesn't get done. Keefe said the new Para-legal position would spend half of their time with the Juvenile Division to give some relief to the Abuse & Neglect Para-legal and the other half of the time would be assigned to the Mental Health docket. Keefe said he does not have one full-time employee to deal with Mental Health and it has created some problems in getting notice to outside agencies.

Keefe proceeded to tell the Board he could eliminate positions in his office for his reduction, but all of those reductions would have a serious impact because someone has to get the cases done.

Kroeker said right now the City is paying for one Attorney and one Para-legal from the Public Defender's office to cover the City's misdemeanor cases.

Campbell told Keefe the Board needs to sign a letter with the Advocacy Commission between June 1 and June 15 about the Indigent Defense Standards that was in his annual report. Campbell asked if the Board needed to put in a disclaimer saying they are willing to do this if there are no cuts in the Special Session or Regular Session.

Keefe noted his office will qualify from day one if the Indigent Defense Standards are met and the County will get \$250,000 over the course of the next fiscal year in quarterly installments. He said the only costs that are attributable to the Standards are the position of the Para-legal and Attorney for \$92,000.

Kroeker asked Keefe if the \$92,000 is necessary for getting the maximum reimbursement.

Keefe said the Standards do require that there be a list of qualified Attorney's that the judges use and appoint.

SHERIFF (651)

Terry Wagner, County Sheriff, appeared and distributed documentation regarding his proposed budget and budget reduction plan (Exhibits E & F) and said his main increases were in Personnel, Janitorial Supplies and Medical Services.

Wagner said all of the object codes in the travel category for Extraditions have increased \$14,600 due to getting rid of the aircraft.

Heier questioned the maintenance agreement on equipment.

Bill Jarrett, Deputy County Sheriff, said it is to cover the cost of the lease on the copy machine.

Wagner reported he would like 8 marked patrol cars that he would like to order now, which would replace vehicles that have over 110,000 miles. Wagner is also asking for a Clerk Typist II position because the civil processing has increased 39% since 1990. He said there is \$28,000 left in the Aircraft Capital Improvement Budget from previous years requests and the annual salary and benefits for a Clerk Typist II is \$28,800.

Wagner said in order to reduce his budget by the 3.5% that is requested, he could eliminate the front door security that staff the Hall of Justice or not do extradition, which would save \$46,000. It was his belief, and the Statute wasn't clear, that maybe it should be the State's responsibility to pay for extraditions.

Heier questioned Item 3564 Communication Equipment Repair & Maintenance.

Jarrett indicated the County Sheriff is charged per radio for maintenance whether the radio receives maintenance or not. Jarrett also reported the Dispatch bill is 4% of the Sheriff's budget for the 911 Center.

Jarrett said he has forty-three marked vehicles, fourteen plain vehicles and a van on hand right now. He said the cutoff date for ordering the cars is June 30, but there is a long process to get them ordered.

The Board agreed to get through all of the budgets, which would be around June 6th, to see where they are as far as agencies wanting cars.

Commissioner Heier exited.

ELECTION COMMISSIONER (607)

Dave Shively, appeared and distributed documentation regarding the Election Commissioner's proposed budget (Exhibit G) and indicated there will be the Statewide General Election in November, 2002, City Primary in April, 2003 and the City General in May, 2003.

Shively also indicated with Dee Lee's retirement he had to pay out the extra sick leave and vacation hours. He said the increases in the other areas are due to three upcoming elections as opposed to just one held in 2002.

Shively reported he reduced the number of Election Boards by six saving approximately \$1,750 and they used Correctional Inmates to assist at the warehouse the day prior to election which allowed them not to hire temporary staff, saving approximately \$300. Shively said when they changed polling places, they went with more schools and public buildings because a \$35 stipend is not paid to those groups. He also said they found a way to reduce the postage costs on the polling place cards to 21.7 cents a piece using Goldenrod Printing, saving \$1,617 to \$2,597.

Stevens asked where Shively's revenue comes from.

Shively said the revenue comes from the Political Subdivisions that are smaller than the County. He said the Cities, School Boards, Southeast Community College and Villages are all required to pay a specific portion of their costs to the Election Commission for conducting their elections and it's based on the amount of space they require on the ballot.

JURY COMMISSIONER (627)

Shively reported he didn't anticipate any changes except a little increase because the Jury Management System needs to be updated. He said Shirley Crocker currently types all of the names into a Lotus database, it is then sent up to the Clerk of District Court, who types up the payment voucher. Shively said it is then sent to the County Clerk's office and is typed in one more time. He indicated he is looking at a way of coming up with a system on the Jury Management System that will keep track of attendance of jurors, when they come in and their mileage and how it can be sent over to the Clerk's office electronically. Shively said the system hasn't been updated for 15 to 20 years and with the increase in jury terms, cases are being moved through much more quickly and a lot of jurors are being called.

Kroeker said there is \$30,500 budgeted for the Jury Management System.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (693)

Doug Ahlberg, Emergency Management Director, appeared, distributed documentation regarding his budget reduction summary (Exhibit H) and noted the LEOP project should be completed this year and the LEPC duties he can assume, which will save \$7,000.

Ahlberg said annually Lincoln Electric System and Norris Public Power charge Emergency Services \$3,000 for electric siren services. He said each siren in the City, except for two, are \$7.65 a month and all of the ones in the County are \$13.15 a month per siren.

Campbell asked about the new sirens and said an impact fee that would replace the sirens should be imposed when a new development is put together.

Ahlberg also pointed out that he doesn't have any control over the Paging Service, which was sold to another company who tripled the costs. Ahlberg said anytime any of the National Weather Service locations issue severe weather alerts two counties away from Lancaster, the pager goes off.

Ahlberg said the \$2,161 increase in line item 1053 is for Cori Beattie, County Board Secretary, to help him 10 hours a month if needed.

Kroeker asked about the \$75,138 budgeted for the sirens and the \$16,000 that was put on the budget reduction list. He asked if Ahlberg could lengthen the replacement schedule by one more year.

Ahlberg said he could, but the sirens effect the safety of people that live within one mile of the location of the siren, depending on where it is placed. He said the \$75,138 would be replacing a siren that has an effect range of 4,000 feet with a siren that can send out to 5,280 feet.

COUNTY TREASURER (603)

Richard Nuernberger, County Treasurer, and Terry Adams, Deputy County Treasurer, appeared and distributed documentation regarding the County Treasurer's budget reduction plan (Exhibit I).

Adams noted in the reduction plan his office could eliminate overtime, which would slow the processing of mail in all three departments. Adams did say that the second half of the year is slower for Motor Vehicles and that is why he reduced the postage by \$10,000.

Hudkins asked about the overtime in Accounting.

Adams said the Accounting Department doesn't do just Accounting, they work the counter also assisting customers with tax payments.

Adams also noted that 25% of the people who renew their license plates do it through the mail, so people are using the service.

Campbell asked if it would be two years when a new design would come out on the plates.

Nuernberger said two or three years and commented that not very many people are satisfied with the new plates.

Adams said most people aren't satisfied with the color but they like the three numeric three letter code.

Adams also said Wells Fargo has been going to a lot of different surrounding counties to promote payment by credit cards. He said the only County that accepts credit cards right now is Sarpy County.

Kroeker asked the Treasurer if he believed he would collect \$1.4 million in revenue this year and wondered if it would be a reach for next year.

Adams said he believes, after speaking with Wells Fargo and US Bank, there will be a turn in the interest rates in the next 6 months.

Adams also noted that when the digital Driver's License becomes available, it will be even better. He said the State now sends a letter to the individuals whose driver's license will be expiring telling the person they have 90 days to renew their driver's license, along with a card that is all filled out and ready to go. Adams said all you have to do is hand it to the Driver's License person, they scan it and the person is on their way.

COUNTY ATTORNEY (652)

Joe Kelly, Chief Deputy County Attorney, and Eileen LeGrande, Administrator, appeared.

Hudkins asked Kelly where most of the grand jury cases are being held at.

Kelly said most of them are being held at the Hall of Justice.

Campbell asked the number of people involved on a grand jury.

Kelly said there are 16 jurors that sit, a Judge, the Attorney's, Court Reporter, witness and sometimes an Attorney's witness.

Gary Lacey, County Attorney, appeared and said the fact of the matter is crime is going up with more crime happening every day. He said methamphetamine and heroin are such a big problem that the Mayor called a conference on them. Lacey said he cannot decrease his budget, he needs one more Attorney and another Para-legal. Lacey also said he has spoke with Keefe regarding the Mental Health situation and they haven't made any progress.

Lacey reported traffic cases keep going up and he can't take a traffic attorney and put them on the mental health cases part-time, because mental health is now a full-time job with over 400 cases being filed. He said Dorothy Walker is taking advantage of her contract by having someone outside her contract look at some of the people which takes more time and coordination to get the reports to them and if there is a conflict there is a hearing and that also drags it out.

Campbell asked about his request to purchase a few Palm Pilot's from the Drug Forfeiture Fund and asked if the funds could be used for a one-time expense because the County is in a tight situation.

Lacey said it has to be drug related and can be used for things like training and computer programs, but it can't be used to decrease any or part of the ordinary budget.

Hudkins asked about Medical Services Item 3058.

Lacey said the autopsies will go from \$1000 to \$1200 per autopsy beginning June 1st. He said Bryan Hospital has also been negotiating with the County Attorney's office to raise the fees for all the services they provide. He said he could possibly ask Douglas County to do the autopsies, but that would entail sending the bodies to Omaha and bringing them back. The transportation fees and officers that would have to be present for the autopsy would have to be taken care of by the Lincoln Police Department.

Workman asked how many autopsies are performed a year.

Lacey said at least 400 autopsies are done a year and an autopsy is done on all children under the age of 18.

Workman asked if any of his attorney's were really swamped or bogged down.

Lacey said Barb Armstead, who is handling the mental health cases, stays at work late every night working on the cases to get them completed. He said she puts in way over her fair share of 40 hours.

Kroeker asked if the positions Lacey was requesting were in the budget.

Lacey said no.

Lacey also expressed concern regarding the move by the County to give more vacation to the Attorney's.

The Board believed Lacey wanted the extra vacation for better recruitment from what Personnel told them.

Lacey said there are people that won't take their vacation and then people that take all of their vacation and it is hard for him to have Attorney's cover other Attorney's jobs. Lacey also said something needs to be done with how the Court's operate themselves because 10% of the time is spent waiting for court.

The Board agreed Keefe and Lacey need to sit down with Personnel and discuss the vacation change request.

MOTION: Stevens moved and Hudkins seconded to adjourn the meeting at 4:52 p.m. On call Campbell, Stevens, Hudkins and Workman voted aye. Motion carried.

Bruce Medcalf
County Clerk